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771 The form in which it is found is different from that among Shangana-
794 Tonga and lent itself to ready incorporation into Lovedu religion.
177 Among Shangana-Tonga, the possessing spirit is regarded as a foreign spirit from some outside tribe; among the Lovedu it is an ancestor who may, like any ancestor, demand the usual shrine or dedicated animal. The cult is not accepted by all and the royal family deprecate it as foreign and as detracting from their prestige. Its noisiness and showiness, though incongruous with the traditional reserve and lack of display, makes a popular appeal in these more insecure days.

794 A spirit entering a person causes illness and the first object of the cult
753 is directed at curing the illness, so that initiation is regarded as therapeutic. Long-continued illness of a patient, which will yield to no curative treatment, will be diagnosed as due to an ancestral spirit 'pressing him down', because it wants to manifest itself in him. The symptoms are never very definite: Mashishimali was 'ill all over the body' and suffered from swollen legs which five different doctors had tried unsuccessfully to cure; Mamolatla was weak and ailing after the birth of her first child. The symptoms are neither violent, like the running amuck which accompanies *ukuthwasa* among the Nguni, nor of a specifically nervous nature.
● [828] Epilepsy, which is common, bears no relation to possession, and any peculiar behaviour is more liable to be attributed to witchcraft than to the spirits. It is believed that a possessed person after death likes in turn to manifest itself in some descendant and there is a tendency for possession to run in families. In one family three sisters and their mother were all possessed. Sometimes, especially where others in the family are possessed, a person does not even get ill; he just becomes possessed when people are singing or dancing in the manner of the cult. Contact with certain localities or people associated with possession is often sufficient. Thus it is said that, should one be among the Sekhwasha in Portuguese East Africa, who become possessed in a manner different from the Lovedu, one risks becoming possessed by merely picking up something dropped by a member of that tribe or eating the fruit of the fig, *mudomma* (*Diospyros mespiliformis*), or *munthethethe* (*Cassia petersiana*).

794 Once it is known that a person is being 'pressed down' by some spirit
755 wishing to manifest itself, a *lelopo* doctor, himself possessed and skilled in dealing with the possessed, is called to cure the patient. This is done, not by exorcism, but by rites designed to enable the spirit to come and make known its wishes along legitimate channels, known in the cult. For the spirits that possess people are not evil spirits to be expelled; they are the ancestors whom one worships, and their desire occasionally to manifest themselves through some living relative is comparable to that impulse towards life that makes them desire shrines, dedicated animals, and the perpetuation of their names in their descendants. The method by which a spirit is enabled to 'come out' and disclose its identity and the possessed person to become the host (*ledala*) of the spirit without being ill consists largely of dancing; and on all subsequent occasions when the
794 spirits manifest themselves they signify their desire to dance.

755 Dancing is the central feature of the cult. The spirits are thought to
535 enjoy this dancing; when manifesting themselves at festivities of the

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754 in spite of one's own convictions. Moreover, it does not follow that
761 the witch has any evil designs upon one, though he has killed some
777 one else. Personal adjustments with the witch are more easily achieved than we might imagine; they are even imperative, partly because witchcraft is so universal a cause of death that in this respect the witch is almost part of the inevitable order of things, partly because, unless a confirmed witch, he is not regarded with horror by the whole society, and partly because he may be an influential and respected man.

Witchcraft serves also to explain the differential incidence of misfortune or death which we generally leave unexplained; but it is not often invoked in this respect. An old, dried-up tree stands in a field. People often rest beneath it at hoeing time. One day, while two children are sitting in its shade, it falls down and kills one of them. The Lovedu realize that dead trees are liable to fall down. But it has long been standing there. Why has it fallen just on that day and, moreover, at that particular time when the children were there? Further, what made it kill one, leaving the other unhurt? This combination of circumstances must, they feel, be due to some malignant controlling force directed against the child. Or, when people recover from a disease such as smallpox in one district, but succumb to it in another, the differential effect in the latter is ascribed to the work of a witch. The occasion for evoking witchcraft as an explanation in certain circumstances is an aspect of witchcraft, but it is not an explanation of its nature and psychological basis and only part of the explanation of its function.

754 Witchcraft is employed to account for unusual or anti-social behaviour.
● 828 Hysteria might be attributed either to witchcraft or possession. A girl ran away from her own puberty ceremony, an unheard-of and reprehensible action. Her relatives said she must have been bewitched into doing it, so, instead of being punished, she was given treatment to remove the baleful influence. Attributing certain types of anti-social action or the breaking of some customs to witchcraft makes it possible for the society to withstand successfully many blows; an issue is avoided and the transgressor made to feel himself incapable of such actions but for the witchcraft. We must also remember that abnormalities need not necessarily evoke comment. A person may be born an imbecile, but it may be considered quite normal. This is so because there is a place in the society for the weak-minded, sometimes even as jesters of the court. Personal defects or limitations do not, to the same extent as among us, disable a man from performance markedly below the standards required in spheres in which he can be useful; and thus there need not arise an intolerable situation from which escape is sought by psycho-pathological devices or the projection of one's misfortune as witchcraft upon others. Finally, to attribute death to witchcraft, and to set about taking steps to send it back to its owner, probably provides greater emotional satisfaction to the bereaved than the feeling of impotence in the face of an uncontrollable, natural force. The same kind of emotional need is answered when a man with a grievance feels that he can, in the last resort, employ medicine to gain his ends, and people not infrequently indirectly hint to their enemies the possibility of their doing so.

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moving her to pity and by 'cooling' the heat of the earth and the anger of the ancestors. Frenzy and excess are outlawed, moderation and balance are honoured. They have little conception of the Buddhistic Nirvana or annihilation of human existence, of the fanaticism and fatalism of the soldiers of Allah, or even of Western concentration and intensive striving. From the point of view of our values, the Lovedu are Laodicean, 'lukewarm, neither hot nor cold', happy-go-lucky. They are always saying that they will 'try', never that they must succeed. But there is nothing intensive about their striving. A man faced with a difficulty is always advised to 'persevere', but that does not imply our grim determination, being more like the leisurely manner in which they set about all their tasks.

This theme permeates every aspect of the culture. In the boys' circumcision the object is to break the child of his wildness and lack of balance, and the purpose is achieved, not by excessive tortures and privations, but by the mature guidance of the old men. Neither strength nor stoicism are much made of, and the virtues inculcated are balance and self-sufficiency. The Lovedu tolerate ostentation only on occasions appropriate to exhilaration, quite unlike even such nearly related tribes as the Maḍala and Phalaborwa, who have institutionalized boasting displays by those famed as hunters or warriors. In the field of the magico-religious, fastings and visions do not figure, except among the possessed and the smellers-out, the latter always foreigners, the former a recent introduction. Possession in its Lovedu context has been shorn of its paranoic elements, its exaggerated trances, and its inception in a mental cataclysm. Cataleptic seizures do not serve as inductions to the supernatural as among the Nguni, for fits are due to witchcraft, and, unlike the smeller-out, who is a Shangana-Ṭonga and works by insight and exaggerated procedures, the Lovedu doctor divines by his craft and acquires power by learning and experience. Prayer is not an emotional outpouring of the heart, but a communication as between man and man. Dissension in her country upsets, and anger in her heart inhibits, the power of the queen. Spells are not characterized by intensity or malevolence; they are often merely directions to the medicine to bring about justice or to restore the balance. Even at a death or burial, there must be no display of distress, no undue weeping; both the dying and the survivors resign themselves with a calmness that is the admiration of Europeans who know the Lovedu well. Too much weeping by a mother is believed to injure her next child; Mputa, now thirty years of age, was born a cripple, it is said, because his mother, Makwada, wept bitterly at the death of her first son. We have never seen weeping at a funeral, and the property of the deceased is not so contaminated that it has to be destroyed, though in the midst of the Lovedu the Shangana-Ṭonga phrase death as a terror situation, even pulling down the hut of the deceased and removing from his village. Suicide is an escape, intelligible enough when a man is insane or (in the old days) has been condemned to death as a witch; but otherwise it is attributed to witchcraft, not to frustration.

In the method by which the themes of both sex and authority are handled there is the same aversion from excess or ostentation. The Lovedu

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charms or *digɔma*. *Makhuma* which arises from critical transitions causes mainly stomach trouble and general debility in men and cattle; but it also causes weakening of the mystical powers concentrated in sacred objects. These ritual forces do not strike down the guilty person: it is, for example, not the husband who will be revenged if the adulterer approaches the hut of his wife; or when a woman has procured an abortion, it is not she but her innocent lover who will be affected with *dɛrɛ*, the most dreaded disease among the Lovedu. The harmful effects of all these forms of impurity are not sanctions against the acts or events causing the impurity, but sanctions for taking the necessary precautions to remove the impurity and prevent it from spreading to others, or from causing some calamity not necessarily affecting the guilty person. And, as so often happens in Lovedu society, it is generally *ex post facto*, and as an explanation of some illness or evil that these conceptions are invoked and steps are taken to put things right.

The concatenations of actions and conditions that must be avoided lest they bring about misfortune and evil to men are wider than what is included in the conceptions of 'heat', *muridi*, and *makhuma*. Many things or natural objects brought into relation with men have evil consequences and must be avoided: they are taboo (*hu ila*). Burning a certain kind of wood in the village causes quarrels; working in the fields the day after the first rain is taboo, not sanctioned by a penalty but the breach of which is a bane (*lesola*) that may portend evil. The breach of these taboos is disapproved but leads to no organized reaction or public indignation even where it affects the welfare of all, as in the case of a wrong burial. A man who sleeps with his wife while she is still suckling a child may thereby cause the death of his child; but it is his own foolish and inconsiderate conduct that causes the mother's breast to *khuma* (become polluted and weakened), and it is not the concern of outsiders. He is a fool rather than criminal.

Many things in nature are recognized as directly affecting man adversely; various foods and drinks cause stomach troubles; poisonous weeds may kill cattle which, like men, occasionally die of old age; many minor illnesses are attributed to natural causes, e.g. one may contract malaria by walking in the dew in the early morning. Epidemics may be brought about naturally by the air or wind (*phɛfo*). 'Ward off from us these winds' is a constant plea in prayers to the ancestors. Hot, dry winds which drive away rain-bearing clouds or dissolve them in thunderstorms or gales are thought to be specially detrimental to the rain, and it is the duty of the ancestors to keep away such winds. Even anxiety or worry wears a man down (*hu seḍa mutho a homehwa*, lit., scrapes a man thin). A woman who is prone to break her pots is not bewitched; she has *khifyaisa*, a natural propensity for breaking, which can be cured by medicine.

The Lovedu also have the conception of natural accident (*gozi*) and of luck (*leshuto*), though bad luck is sometimes attributed to breach of obligations to kin, to malicious gossip, or to the misconduct in one's absence of one's wife.